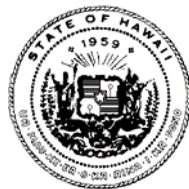


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

April 7, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1518 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

Hearing: April 8, 2026, Time 10:15 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this bill, provides comments, and asks for an amendment extending the effective date to January 1, 2028.

As drafted this bill requires DHS to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release and allowing individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status. The SD1 changed the implementation date from January 1, 2028, to February 28, 2027. DHS prefers the January 2028 implementation due to current priorities with modernizing its eligibility system and efforts to implement programmatic changes required by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), Public Law 119-21. (See discussion below).

For the committee's information, DHS recently partnered with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) to pilot a pre-release application process. Individuals scheduled for release will be assisted by DCR staff to complete a SNAP application, which will be routed to a DHS point of contact once the individual's release date is finalized. This pilot is has two DCR facilities on Oahu for individuals that have a set release date from prison.

DHS will use lessons learned from this pilot to determine how and when to expand this to additional DCR facilities and whether a waiver would further enhance the services provided and be pursued. Additionally, information gained through this pilot will inform the DHS of any additional resources needed for the new Benefit Eligibility System (BES) and SNAP operations to better support a pre-release application. Respectfully, the proposed statutory framework may be pre-mature.

DHS appreciates the measure's acknowledgment (page 2, starting at line 13) of the Department's current process to update its benefits eligibility solution, automate tasks, expand its ability to address the needs of benefit program recipients, and consider the time required to fully implement the system statewide. We presently are scheduled to begin the pilot in October 2026 with a statewide rollout in February 2027. The SD1 waiver implementation timeline would coincide with the scheduled statewide rollout and may be very difficult to achieve.

Importantly, along with the scheduled BES rollout, the Department's focus is on implementing programmatic changes required by OBBBA. DHS staff are prioritizing efforts to lower the State's SNAP payment error rate (PER) to minimize the fiscal impacts Hawaii may be responsible for effective federal fiscal year 2027 should our SNAP payment error rate be too high.

Notably, OBBBA authorized a new cost-share model for the SNAP benefits tied to payment error rates (PER). Currently, the SNAP benefit is 100% federally funded and the OBBBA cost-share will require states to pay a percentage of the SNAP benefit based on the PER. Specifically, OBBBA requires states with a PER of 6% or higher (based on the PER from either federal fiscal year 2025 or 2026; states choose which year's error rate to use as the baseline), to fund a percentage of total SNAP benefits with state funds.

Hawaii currently issues roughly \$660 million in SNAP benefits annually. Using this annual amount as an estimate, the projected percentage tiering for Hawaii would be the following:

Table 1. Cost Share for SNAP Benefits by payment error rate, beginning federal fiscal year 2028.

Payment Error Rate	Potential Cost Share for SNAP Benefits	
	% of State Cost Share for SNAP	Est. Annual Amount to be paid by Hawaii
<6%	0%	\$0
6-7.99%	5%	\$33,000,000
8-9.99%	10%	\$66,000,000
10% or above	15%	\$99,000,000

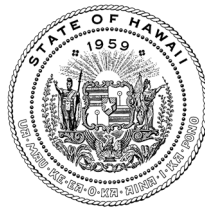
Hawaii’s most recent PER for federal fiscal year 2024 is 6.68%. DHS achieved this by streamlining and solidifying certain processes, thereby stabilizing the overall eligibility process. While we work to lower the PER, some of the OBBBA changes took effect on the date of the Act’s signing on July 4, 2025, providing no time to adjust. Consequently we anticipate payment errors. As the chart indicates, the financial impact to the State could be significant, and the priority of DHS is to lower our PER.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully requests the effective date for this measure be reverted to January 1, 2028. The Department does not currently have sufficient administrative capacity and resources to initiate and oversee a new program while concurrently transitioning to a new eligibility system and implementing OBBBA.

DHS recognizes that inmates being released from incarceration face barriers upon exit including access to basic necessities such as food. By extending the implementation timeline, individuals exiting correctional facilities can be better served when we have had the time to transition to the BES system, and can address gaps and concerns in the pre-release process while ensuring adequate staffing to assist between the point of exit, application processing, and eligibility determination.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION**
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalu Kalaima
a Ho'oponopono Ola*
1177 Alakea Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

TOMMY JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

Melanie Martin
Deputy Director
Administration

Vacant
Deputy Director
Correctional Institutions

Sanna Muñoz
Deputy Director
Rehabilitation Services
and
Programs

No. _____

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1518, HOUSE DRAFT 1, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

by
Tommy Johnson, Director
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

AND

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 8, 2026; 10:15 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 211 & Via Video Conference

Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, and Members
of both Committee:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1518, House Draft (HD) 1, Senate Draft (SD) 1 which requires the Department of Human Services (DHS), upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release. It further allows individuals who were convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits.

As part of DCR's ongoing efforts to increase reach in wrap around reentry services, we are currently working on a pilot program with DHS at two (2) of our facilities (Waiawa Correctional Facility and Women's Community Correctional Center) to assist those exiting our facilities to apply for SNAP benefits ten (10) days prior to their release. When inmates

HB 1518, HD 1, SD1 Relating to Supplemental
Nutrition Assistance Program.

April 8, 2026

Page 2

are engaged with services prior to their exit from our facilities, it increases their chances of successful reintegration into our communities and helps to reduce recidivism.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of HB 1518, HD 1, SD 1.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MARK PATTERSON
CHAIR

CHRISTIN M. JOHNSON
OVERSIGHT COORDINATOR

COMMISSIONERS
HON. R. MARK BROWNING (ret.)

HON. RONALD IBARRA (ret.)

MARTHA TORNEY

HON. MICHAEL A. TOWN (ret.)

STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
E HUIKALA A MA'EMA'E NŌ
235 S. Beretania Street, 16th Floor
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
(808) 587-4160

TO: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Mark Patterson, Chair
Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission

SUBJECT: House Bill 1518, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Hearing: Wednesday, April 8, 2026; 10:15 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 211

Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

The Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC) **supports** House Bill 1518, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1, relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which requires the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for individuals nearing release.

One of the most consistent findings in reentry research is that access to basic necessities like food, housing, and income reduces the likelihood of recidivism. Individuals leaving correctional facilities face an immediate period of vulnerability, often with limited financial resources, unstable housing, and barriers to employment. Ensuring timely access to SNAP benefits at the point of release provides a critical stabilizing resource that supports lawful reintegration and reduces the pressure to return to survival-based criminal activity.

When returning citizens are able to meet their basic needs, they are more likely to comply with supervision conditions, engage in treatment or employment programs, and maintain stable family connections. This bill strengthens the reentry pipeline by allowing individuals to begin SNAP eligibility processing before release, eliminating unnecessary gaps in support during a high-risk transition period.

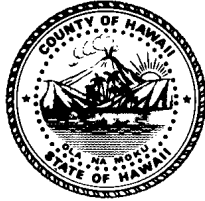
HB1518, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1, also corrects an outdated policy that restricts SNAP eligibility based on drug convictions, even when individuals have completed their sentence. Restoring access to nutritional assistance promotes fairness, reintegration, and health outcomes, while aligning Hawai'i with evidence-based reentry best practices.

Finally, this measure leverages an existing federal USDA SNAP waiver framework, allowing Hawai'i to draw down federal funds rather than relying solely on state resources. By improving post-release stability and reducing reincarceration, HB1518, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1, has the potential to lower long-term correctional costs, making it both a humane and fiscally prudent investment.

Should you have additional questions, the Oversight Coordinator, Christin Johnson, can be reached at 808-849-3580 or at christin.m.johnson@hawaii.gov. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor

William V. Brillhante, Jr.
Managing Director



Benson Medina
Director

Dennis Lin
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

25 Aupuni Street, Room 1301 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-4252
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April 7, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS AND COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Wednesday, April 8, 2026
10:15 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 211

TESTIMONY ON HB 1518: Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committees,

I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to support collaboration, innovation, resource development, and programmatic sustainability throughout the food system to increase access to locally produced food among low-income residents.

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1 SD1** to require the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release and allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

These changes increase SNAP eligibility and access for many in our community. Hawai'i County faces the highest rates of food insecurity in the State, with 43% of Hawai'i County households reporting food insecurity (Hawai'i Foodbank, 2025). When comparing levels of food insecurity found among people released from prison to the general public, formerly incarcerated people fare far worse – studies show food insecurity among formerly incarcerated people in the U.S. to range from 70%-91% ([CLASP, 2022](#)). A pre-release program providing immediate SNAP access will address food insecurity and support successful reintegration. Eliminating the drug felony ban will allow our residents to receive the benefits they deserve.

SNAP is a critical part of a reentry support infrastructure, providing basic food assistance and supplementing inadequate income. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1 SD1**.

Respectfully,
Benson Medina
Director



HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
Chair
John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics

Jennifer José Lo, MD
Vice Chair
Hawai'i Health Partners

Titimaea Ta'ase, JD
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Taase Law Office

Jonathan Ching
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Tammy Ho
The Queen's Medical Center

Carissa Holley, MEd
Hale Makua Health Services

Joyce Lee-Ibarra, MS
JLI Consulting

Misty Pacheco, DrPH
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Dina Shek, JD
Medical-Legal Partnership
For Children in Hawai'i

JoAnn Tsark, MPH
John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native
Hawaiian Research Office

Danette Wong Tomiyasu, MBA
Retired, Hawai'i State Department of
Health

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Climate Change and Health
Working Group

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Immunization Coalition

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: April 6, 2026

To: Sen. Karl Rhoads, Chair
Sen. Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Sen. Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Support for HB 1518 HD1 SD1, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Hrg: April 8, 2026 at 10:15 AM in Conference Room 211

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating, Active Living² (HEAL) coalition **supports HB 1518 HD1 SD1**, relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which by 1/1/2028, requires the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release; and allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefit, regardless of treatment status.

Anti-Hunger Lifeline

SNAP is one of the most effective anti-hunger tools available. In 2025, the program provided nutrition assistance to roughly 85,000 households and over 160,000 individuals per month in our state, delivering an average benefit of over \$360 per person.

Benefits Begin Upon Release

This proposal would allow Hawai'i to seek federal approval to provide SNAP benefits prior to an inmate's release from incarceration. This way, they can start receiving benefits immediately after release, rather than waiting to apply after release. This policy is a proven, evidence-based strategy to support reentry success and reduce recidivism rates by ensuring former inmates have access to food security.

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

² The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.



Formerly Incarcerated Face Extreme Rates of Food Insecurity

Incarceration and hunger are deeply linked. More than 3,700 people are incarcerated in our state's corrections system, including a disproportionate number of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.³ People returning from incarceration often face extreme economic instability, making food insecurity a destabilizing challenge to overcome in the path to reintegration.

Research shows that formerly incarcerated people experience significantly higher rates of food insecurity than the general population, which is associated with poor health outcomes and increased risk of recidivism. Individuals with a history of incarceration have significantly higher odds of chronic or persistent food insecurity across adulthood.⁴ 91% of individuals recently released from prison reported food insecurity, and more than one-third reported going an entire day without eating because they could not afford food.⁵

Proven Successes

Currently, 13 states have adopted SNAP pre-release waivers to ensure benefits are available immediately upon release.⁶ Supporting basic needs during reentry helps people successfully reintegrate into the community, ultimately reducing taxpayer costs associated with emergency services and reincarceration. Giving eligible individuals benefits immediately upon being released, rather than weeks or months later, reduces a critical gap in access to food during reentry, a period associated with elevated mortality, homelessness, and reincarceration risk.⁷

Food security is essential in strengthening our state's efforts to establish a restorative model of offender reintegration. HIPHI urges your committee to support this bill.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kris Coffield'.

Kris Coffield
Policy and Advocacy Associate

³ [Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Weekly Population Report](#), January 26, 2026

⁴ [Prior incarceration and food insecurity trajectories through older adulthood: findings from the Health and Retirement Study](#), Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, November 2025

⁵ [A pilot study examining food insecurity and HIV risk behaviors among individuals recently released from prison](#), AIDS education and prevention, April 2013

⁶ [State Options Report 17th Edition](#), USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2025

⁷ [Homelessness Following Jail Exit Among Previously Housed Individuals](#), Journal of Urban Health, October 2025



HB1518 HD1 SD1 SNAP for Offender Reentry

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Wednesday, Apr 8 26, 2026: 10:15: Room 415 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB1518 HD1 SD1:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the ad hoc leader of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder prevention and treatment agencies and recovery-oriented services.

As a treatment provider working directly with individuals impacted by substance use disorders, we see firsthand how access to basic needs—especially food—plays a critical role in recovery and successful reentry.

Food insecurity is a major barrier to recovery.

Some people enter Substance Use Disorder (SUD) **treatment immediately upon release to receive the support** they need to be successful in their return back into their community.

However, if people don't elect to start SUD treatment, in which case **they return to community with no income, unstable housing, and limited support**. With unmet basic needs, people experience increased stress, medical instability, and higher risk of relapse.

DCR staff can help the justice-involved to complete their SNAP

applications and process the forms correctly to be available immediately upon reentry to avoid probably crisis. By **adding motivational aspects**, this process would reduce gaps, encourage justice-involved to seek care for their SUD medical condition thus strengthening coordination between correctional systems, human services, and community-based SUD treatment providers.

Providing access to SNAP benefits at the point of release helps persons to stabilize, in which case they are more likely to access treatment shortly after release from incarceration. Then treatment can help them focus on learning coping skills, employment readiness, and compliance with supervision requirements rather than daily survival.

When individuals have **access to food, and housing support, people are more likely to access SUD treatment** services, then they are **more likely to remain engaged in care and less likely to return to incarceration.**

Supporting nutrition during reentry is a proven public health intervention that reduces relapse, overdose risk, and recidivism.

We respectfully urge the committee to support this bill and take an important step toward improving recovery, stability, and public safety across our state.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available to answer questions.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

P.O. Box 37158, Honolulu, HI 96837-0158

Phone/E-Mail: [\(808\) 927-1214](tel:(808)927-1214) / kat.caphi@gmail.com

Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan Delacruz, Chair

Senator, Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

10:15 AM

Room 225 and VIDEOCONFERENCE

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HB 1518 HD1, SD1 - DHS SNAP BENEFITS FOR PERSONS NEAR RELEASE FROM INCARCERATION

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz and Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of WAM and JDC Committees!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for almost three decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 3,626 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on March 23, 2026. We are always mindful that 795 of Hawai'i's imprisoned male population are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Mahalo to WAM and JDC for scheduling this important measure that will strengthen the reentry process for those nearing release from incarceration!

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates the opportunity to express our **strong support for HB 1518 HD1, SD1** that requires the Department of Human Services by 2/28/27, requires the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release. Allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status. Effective 7/1/3000. (SD1)

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, March 23, 2026

[Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-03-23.pdf](#)

The prior committee (HHS) amended the date requiring DHS to acquire the federal waiver to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release from 1.1.28 to 2.27.27. She explained that because DCR testified that they are working on an analysis of this bill that will be finished at the end of February next year (2027) she moved the date to when the report would be completed.

Community Alliance on Prisons works with people who are incarcerated and so many are released with nothing – no health care and no money to jumpstart their lives in the community. We are so grateful to DHS for their tireless work to secure the 1115 Medicaid waiver for Hawai`i that allows Medicaid for people before their release and after which allows people to connect with healthcare that is familiar to them since they had that care in the last few months of incarceration. We are also grateful to DCR’s Reentry Office for working on an analysis of this measure.

The importance of SNAP benefits cannot be overstated. Most people are released with nothing except for a few personal items in a garbage bag. This bill affords them the opportunity to purchase food since we know that so many people resort to minor crimes just to feed themselves upon release. This is really a community safety measure.

A publication by the Federal Interagency Reentry Council called “Reentry Myth Busters”² contains the following information:

MYTH: Individuals convicted of a felony can never receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) benefits.

FACT: This ban applies only to convicted drug felons, and only thirteen States have kept the ban in place in its entirety. Most States have modified or eliminated the ban.

The following 18 States and the District of Columbia have eliminated the ban entirely: Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming.

The following 19 States have amended the ban to allow some individuals to regain eligibility by meeting certain additional requirements, like receiving or completing drug or alcohol treatment: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, **Hawaii**, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Community Alliance on Prisons hopes that Hawai`i will eliminate the ban entirely. HB 1518 HD1, SD1 would make Hawai`i the 19th state that has eliminated the ban! This is crucial since so many people exiting incarceration are indigent and have no resources to take care of themselves or their families. This puts their successful reentry and the entire community at risk. As Bob Marley has said, “*A hungry man is an angry man.*”

²Reentry Myth Busters

https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/reentryMythBuster_snapBenefits.pdf

Let's demonstrate that the name change from the Department of Public Safety to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is meaningful, and not just cosmetic. Every incarcerated person is a member of our community and we must do better to help them reintegrate with their families and communities for the greater good of everyone in Hawai'i nei.

This bill strengthens Hawai'i's safety net by enabling pre-release SNAP applications and removing unnecessary barriers tied to past convictions. Ensuring people have access to food immediately upon release reduces recidivism, supports successful reentry, and helps individuals and families stabilize during critical transition periods.

We hope that both WAM and JDC committees see the benefits of assisting people who may have lost their way by shining a light of caring and concern to encourage them to be pro-social, contributing members of the larger Hawai'i community by passing HB 1518 HD1, SD1!

Community Alliance on Prisons is grateful to WAM and JDC for scheduling HB 1518 HD1, SD1.

Mahalo for this opportunity to share our mana`o and for strengthening Hawai'i's reentry process by passing this important bill!



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for HB 1518 – Relating to SNAP
Senate Committees on Judiciary and Ways and Means
Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 10:15AM

Dear Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **HB 1518**, which would require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release.

SNAP is a critical lifeline for more than 160,000 Hawai‘i residents, supporting working families, individuals with disabilities, and others living on fixed or limited incomes.¹ Without it, many of these individuals would not have any money to pay for food at all. Additionally, 1 in 3 Hawai‘i residents remain food insecure, struggling with the state’s continued high cost of living.²

The changes proposed in **HB 1518** will help SNAP reach more Hawai‘i residents by allowing incarcerated individuals to apply before release, ensuring they have food support immediately upon reentry. Food insecurity disproportionately affects people returning from incarceration, who face barriers to employment, housing, and benefits access. Research indicates that the vast majority of people recently released from prison experience food insecurity. Over 90% of respondents in a multi-state survey reported they lacked reliable access to food, with more than one-third going an entire day without eating because they couldn’t afford food.³

Thirteen states have already successfully used SNAP pre-release application waivers to accept and process SNAP applications from institutional residents nearing release, allowing benefits to begin immediately upon reentry.⁴

In addition, this bill eliminates the restriction on individuals with prior drug convictions from accessing benefits unless they are enrolled in a treatment program. This outdated policy does not advance public safety or health outcomes; instead, it creates unnecessary obstacles for individuals involved in the justice system who are seeking to rebuild their lives and achieve self-sufficiency.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 1518, as it is key in advancing food equity and strengthening our vital social safety nets.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “SNAP Data Tables: National and/or State Level Monthly and/or Annual Data,” Food and Nutrition Service, 2025. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

² Hawai‘i Foodbank, “The State of Food Insecurity in Hawai‘i 2024-2025: Executive Summary,” Hawai‘i Foodbank, November 2025. https://hawaiiifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HFB.ExecutiveSummary2025_Web-FINAL.pdf

³ Wang, Emily A et al. “A pilot study examining food insecurity and HIV risk behaviors among individuals recently released from prison.” AIDS education and prevention : official publication of the International Society for AIDS Education vol. 25,2 (2013): 112-23. doi:10.1521/aeap.2013.25.2.112

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “SNAP State Options Report,” Food and Nutrition Service, 2025, p. 35. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-stateOptionsReport-17edition-120925.pdf>



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

SUPPORT FOR HB 1518 HD1 SD1: RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

TO: Senate Committees on Ways and Means and Judiciary

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Wednesday, 4/8/26; 10:15 AM; CR 211 and videoconference

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Rhoads, and Members, Committees on Ways and Means and Judiciary:

I am Betty Lou Larson from Catholic Charities Hawaii. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 1518 HD1**, which requires the Department of Human Services, upon receiving a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release from Hawaii's correctional facilities.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax-exempt, Community-Based Organization that has provided social services in Hawaii for more than 78 years, now serving over 40,000 individuals statewide each year. CCH offers a wide range of programs supporting children, families, older adults, immigrants, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for Hawaii's most vulnerable. We have a long-standing history of leadership in affordable housing and homelessness solutions.

Catholic Charities Hawaii strongly supports HB 1518 HD1 because it will reduce recidivism, strengthen food security, and support a smoother transition back into the community for formerly incarcerated individuals. Many people leaving correctional facilities face immediate challenges—including the risk of homelessness—and access to SNAP can provide vital stability as they work to rebuild their lives.

This bill would ensure that individuals nearing release are identified and assisted with the SNAP application process **before** they return to the community. Having benefits available upon release can make a critical difference in meeting basic needs. It reduces the pressure to return to survival-based criminal activities, thus reducing recidivism. Notably, **thirteen states** have already obtained the federal waiver needed to implement similar pre-release SNAP application programs.

Thank you for hearing this important measure, which will provide critical food stability to support lawful reintegration into our communities.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, at (808) 527-4813.





Hawai'i

Committee: Ways and Means
Judiciary
Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 10:15am
Place: Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1 SD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

Dear Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice-Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i (ACLU-HI) **supports HB1518 HD1 SD1** Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) by 2/28/27 upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. It also allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Current federal law prohibits individuals convicted for a felony for possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance. However, federal law also allows for states to opt out of this disqualification and Hawai'i has reduced this restriction to allow those individuals to receive benefits after they have completed their sentences or treatment, or who are complying with a treatment program.

Today, 13 states have waived this requirement entirely. Hawai'i should join them.

We know that people entering prison are “more likely than the general population to have experienced poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and poor health.”¹ The same is likely true when they reach the end of their terms and return to their communities.

Like permanent housing and permanent employment, food security is an essential part of financial stability and lends to reduced recidivism rates.² Prisoners at the end of their

¹ National Research Council, *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*, National Academies Press, 2014, <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/18613/the-growth-of-incarceration-in-the-united-states-exploring-causes>.

² Prior incarceration and food insecurity trajectories through older adulthood: findings from the Health and Retirement Study. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2025 Nov. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40707238/>.

sentences often need assistance with reentry and it behooves us to ensure they are provided with all the tools necessary to succeed at their post-incarceration lives.

SNAP can be a key part of reentry support infrastructure. By allowing the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and DHS to coordinate to ensure a prisoner has access to SNAP benefits on day one of their release is an essential and relatively low hanging tool the state can employ. “Early access to fundamental supports, such as food, may mitigate the risk of rearrest or reincarceration.”³

Hawai‘i is in the process of implementing a Section 1115 Waiver, which allows for prisoners nearing the end of their sentences to apply for Medicaid coverage. While DHS works to comply with the requirements of this waiver, we understand that the department is also in the process of completing upgrades to its benefits eligibility processes and technology.

We urge the committee to advance this legislation and help our incarcerated individuals as they return to their families and reenter their communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,
Josh Frost
Josh Frost
Policy Assistant
ACLU of Hawai‘i
jfrost@acluhawaii.org

With more than 4,000 Hawai‘i-based members, the mission of the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai‘i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the United States and Hawai‘i State Constitutions through legislative, litigation, and public education work. The ACLU of Hawai‘i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai‘i has been serving our communities in Hawai‘i for over 60 years.

³ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, How SNAP Can Better Serve the Formerly Incarcerated, 2018, https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/how-snap-can-better-serve-the-formerlyincarcerated#_ftn6.



Committees on Judiciary and Ways and Means
Judiciary Chair Karl Rhodes, Ways & Means Chair Donovan Dele Cruz

4/8/26 at 10:15, CR 211 & Videoconference
HB1518 HD1 — SNAP, Incarcerated Individuals, Drug Offenders

TESTIMONY

Stephen Munkelt, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhodes, Chair Dela Cruz, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports BILL NUMBER HB1518 HD1

This bill requires the DHS to seek a federal waiver to allow SNAP benefits to be provided to felony drug offenders, and to allow applications for SNAP by incarcerated individuals before their release.

We know that people who don't have sufficient food are more likely to commit crimes – like Jean Valjean stealing a loaf of bread. A large percentage of incarcerated individuals have experienced poverty, homelessness and poor health before being arrested. When they are released they will face the same challenges – including where to find their first meal when they are released from custody, usually with just the clothes on their back. An application for SNAP benefits takes time to review and approve, so a person who applies after release from jail has a real problem: where to get food in the meantime. Providing for an application to SNAP in time for benefits to be available upon release is a rational, humane procedure.

Federal rules ban SNAP for people with drug convictions as a collateral consequence of conviction. Frankly this only increases the chance of new crimes as people who already have challenges in maintaining themselves struggle to access food. HB1518 HD1 wisely seeks to move past this disqualification in the interest of meeting the most basic needs of our population.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that one of the goals of social policy in the United States should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families and that the most-effective social

programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty. Eligibility of all low-income individuals for assistance should be based on need, and not withheld because of past behavior.

For these reasons we urge you to **pass HB1518 HD1**.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Stephen Munkelt
Kailua-Kona, HI



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: Senate Committees on Judiciary and on Ways and Means
Re: **HB1518 HD1 SD1– Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference
April 8, 2026 10:15 AM

Dear Chairs Rhoads and Dela Cruz, Vice Chairs Gabbard and Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1518 HD1 SD1**, which would require the Department of Humans Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release as well as allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Food insecurity after incarceration is widespread and severe. More than 90% of recently released individuals experience food insecurity, and many report going days without eating. This instability increases the risk of homelessness and reincarceration.

By allowing inmates to apply for SNAP before release, this bill would close a critical hunger gap during reentry. It would ensure that they can access food immediately—rather than waiting weeks or months for SNAP benefits while trying to rebuild their lives.

Pre-release SNAP application programs are a proven, evidence-based solution. Thirteen states have already implemented SNAP pre-release waivers successfully, demonstrating that this approach works. In addition, reliable access to food reduces emergency service use, homelessness, and recidivism—helping people succeed while lowering public costs.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:35:24 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beppie Shapiro	Testifying for League of Women Voters of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports HB1518 HD1 SD1. The League of Women Voters advocates for a humane and effective judiciary system, including humane treatment of incarcerated individuals.

We know that the first months or year after release from incarceration is a critical period of vulnerability. Immediate needs for food and housing create susceptibility to return to self-destructive habits. This bill addresses one of these needs: access to food. It's a very simple way to improve the circumstances of released individuals and improve the chances that the individual will rehabilitate; society as well as the individual will benefit.

Please pass HB1518 HD1 SD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.



To: Judiciary Committee and Senate Ways and Means Committee

Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday April 8, 10:15 AM

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 1518 HD1 SD1

From: Heather Lusk, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

Dear Chair Rhoads, Chair Dela Cruz and Members of JDC and WAM:

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHHRC) **supports HB 1518 HD1 SD1** which would support SNAP for those leaving incarceration. With the most recent 1115 Waiver which allows MedQuest to re-start up to 90 days prior to release, this bill will support people in successfully navigating community reintegration after incarceration.

HHHRC's mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Heather Lusk, Executive Director, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 |
Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e:
info@hawaiiifood.com

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Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Ways and Means, and Committee on Judiciary

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: April 8, 2026

TIME: 10:15m

RE: HB1518 HD1 SD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure. As the measure notes, food security is an essential part of financial stability. We support promoting the financial stability of formerly incarcerated individuals by allowing the State to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released.

We encourage the Committee to pass this measure, and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

Apr 8, 2026

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Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

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The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: HB1518 HD1 SD1 – Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Chairs and Members of the Committees:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) respectfully submits this testimony in **support of HB1518 HD1 SD1**.

AILH is a Center for Independent Living serving rural Oahu and all neighbor islands. As a cross-disability, community-based organization, AILH supports people with all types of disabilities to live in the communities of their choice, with the services and supports they need to remain independent.

HB1518 SD1 would require the Department of Human Services to seek a federal waiver to establish a **pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process** for people who are incarcerated and nearing release, and to implement that process upon obtaining the waiver by February 28, 2027. The bill also allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits **regardless of treatment status**, removing Hawaii's current treatment-condition barrier for SNAP access.

From an Independent Living perspective, food security is a basic community-living support, not a luxury. When people return to the



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community without immediate access to food assistance, they can quickly experience hunger, unstable housing, deteriorating health, and increased risk of returning to institutional or crisis systems. For disabled people leaving incarceration—including those with psychiatric disabilities, substance use disabilities, chronic health conditions, cognitive disabilities, and mobility limitations—these harms are often more severe and can undermine reentry entirely.

The pre-release SNAP application process contemplated in HB1518 SD1 is a practical, evidence-informed approach that aligns with Judiciary and WAM priorities. It promotes safer reentry and reduced recidivism by allowing eligibility work to begin before release so that, if approved, benefits are available immediately upon or shortly after release, while still complying with federal rules that prohibit benefits being issued before a person leaves custody. This reduces avoidable crises that often fall back onto courts, correctional systems, and state-funded health and human services.

AILH also strongly supports the bill's provision eliminating the SNAP disqualification related to certain felony drug convictions based on treatment status. Under current state law, only individuals convicted of a qualifying felony drug offense who have successfully completed or are complying with a treatment program may receive SNAP, which ties food access to the availability and accessibility of specific programs. In practice, disabled people can face significant barriers to entering or completing treatment, including transportation and communication barriers, lack of accessible or culturally responsive services, co-occurring conditions, long waitlists, and the simple absence of programs on neighbor islands or in rural areas.

Conditioning food assistance on treatment status risks punishing people for gaps and inequities in service systems rather than for individual choices. That is particularly concerning for disabled people who, by definition, may need accommodations and flexible support rather than rigid, one-size-fits-all program requirements. Removing this barrier, as twenty-eight other states and the District of Columbia have already done in



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various ways, is an important step toward a fairer, more disability-inclusive safety net.

For the Committees on Ways and Means and Judiciary, HB1518 SD1 sits at the intersection of fiscal responsibility and justice. Food assistance is a relatively modest investment that can help stabilize people leaving incarceration, reduce pressure on emergency systems, and support better long-term outcomes in housing, employment, and health—all of which are less costly than repeated incarceration, hospitalization, or shelter stays. At the same time, removing the treatment-based SNAP restriction promotes a more just and consistent approach to reentry, one that does not withhold food from people because the services they are expected to use are unavailable or inaccessible.

AILH respectfully requests that, as you move this measure forward in decision-making, you also encourage the Department of Human Services to implement the pre-release SNAP process in a disability-responsive way. Implementation should include accessible, plain-language information; effective communication for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, low vision, or have intellectual or developmental disabilities; accommodations for people with mental health conditions or cognitive disabilities; and proactive coordination with community-based organizations across rural Oahu and the neighbor islands so that people leaving incarceration are not left to navigate this process alone.

For these reasons, Aloha Independent Living Hawaii supports HB1518 HD1 SD1 and urges the Committees on Ways and Means and Judiciary to pass this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

Mahalo,

Roxanne Bolden



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

Executive Director

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We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

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2026 Network Members

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Aloha United Way
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Hawai'i Children's Action
Network
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Hawai'i Good Food Alliance
Hawai'i Public Health Institute
Kōkua Kalihi Valley
Lanakila Pacific
Mālama Kaua'i
Maui Department of
Agriculture
Maui Food Bank
Parents and Children Together
Supersistence
The Food Basket
The Pantry, by Feeding Hawai'i
Together
Wai'anae Coast
Comprehensive Health Center

hawaiihungeraction.org

Senate Committee on Judiciary/Ways & Means

Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 10:15AM

RE: Support for HB 1518, Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Dear Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, and members of the Committee:

SNAP is a critical lifeline for around 160,000 Hawai'i residents, supporting working families, individuals with disabilities, and others living on fixed or limited incomes. Yet food insecurity remains widespread, with 1 in 3 Hawai'i residents struggling due to the state's high cost of living. Without SNAP, many would not have any money to pay for food at all.

HB 1518 helps close a critical gap by allowing people to apply for SNAP before release from incarceration, ensuring access to food immediately upon reentry. Research shows that over 90% of people recently released from prison experience food insecurity, particularly in the days and weeks following release.¹ During this critical transition period, lack of food access can increase the risk of housing instability, poor health outcomes, and reliance on emergency services; providing support helps people focus on successfully rebuilding their lives.

This is a proven approach—thirteen states have already implemented SNAP pre-release application waivers, demonstrating that early access to food assistance is both feasible and effective.

By removing barriers to SNAP, this measure will help ensure that people returning to our communities have the basic support they need to thrive.

Mahalo for your leadership and your consideration of HB 1518.

¹ Wang, Emily A et al. "A pilot study examining food insecurity and HIV risk behaviors among individuals recently released from prison." *AIDS education and prevention : official publication of the International Society for AIDS Education* vol. 25,2 (2013): 112-23. [doi:10.1521/aeap.2013.25.2.112](https://doi.org/10.1521/aeap.2013.25.2.112)



To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Paula Arcena, Senior Vice President of External Affairs
Mike Nguyen, Senior Director of External Affairs
Maria Rallojey, Public Policy Specialist

Hearing: Wednesday, April 8, 2026, 10:15am, Conference Room 211

RE: **HB1518 HD1 SD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB1518 HD1 SD1**. This measure would (1) require the Department of Human Services, upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release, and (2) allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan founded by Hawai'i's Community Health Centers and the Queen Emma Clinics. We serve over 66,000 Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dual-eligible residents on all islands. Since 1994, AlohaCare has partnered with providers, government entities, and community-based organizations to meet the evolving needs of our safety net community as Hawai'i's only health plan focused solely on Medicaid-eligible individuals. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for equitable access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare's commitment to whole-person care and health equity includes addressing various social determinants of health, including food security. The transition back into the community is a period of high vulnerability. People often leave without stability or strong social support. Having SNAP benefits immediately upon or shortly after release strengthens their food security and removes barriers and delays to nutrition support access. As part of the safety net, AlohaCare sees how food insecurity worsens chronic conditions and mental health. As such, we support this measure to ensure early access to nutrition support for those nearing release,



allowing them to focus on employment, health care, and family reunification; all of which improve long-term health and stability.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support** of **HB1518 HD1 SD1**.



MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

LATE

April 7, 2026

Re: Support for HB 1518, HD1 SD1 Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committees,

On behalf of Hawai'i Foodbank, I express our support for HB1518, HD1 SD1 Relating to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This bill, by 1/1/2028, requires the Department of Human Services (DHS), upon obtaining a federal waiver, to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. It also allows all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

For over 40 years, Hawai'i Foodbank has provided daily and emergency assistance to those facing food insecurity in Hawai'i. As the state's leading hunger-relief organization, Hawai'i Foodbank distributes food to families and individuals on O'ahu and in Kaua'i County through direct service programs and through our network of 266 agency partners and pantries. Last year, we served an average of over 160,000 people each month, distributing more than 22 million pounds of nutritious food, including more than 7.1 million pounds of fresh produce.

Hawai'i Foodbank is also contracted as a SNAP outreach provider through the State. In this role, our team has seen firsthand the challenges SNAP applicants face. SNAP provides essential support to many families, but the complicated application and recertification process often causes eligible recipients to lose their benefits. Furthermore, the new changes in federal law will create even greater challenges for those trying to access this critical program.

This bill allows inmates to apply for SNAP before being released, which ensures they can access this important support system immediately upon reentry and closing a critical hunger gap.

Food security is a critical issue in Hawai'i, where one in three households lack comprehensive access to healthy, nutritious food. SNAP is one of our most important anti-hunger programs and supporting this evidence-based hunger intervention—at a timeline that is aligned with the capacity of DHS—is critical to our collective fight against hunger.

Mahalo for your consideration.

With aloha,



Amy Miller
President and CEO, Hawai'i Foodbank



**Senate Committee on Judiciary &
Senate Committee on Ways and Means**

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: HB1518 HD1 SD1

April 8th, 2026 at 10:15am; Conference Room 211

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the committees,

HAPA is testifying in **support** of HB1518 HD1 SD1 which requires the Department of Human Services to: (1) seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release; and (2) allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Currently, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance however, as revealed in the preamble of this bill, federal law allows state legislatures to opt out of the disqualification or modify the disqualification to impose a less severe restriction. This legislation would allow Hawai'i to join thirteen other states that have received a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications. This policy has a proven track record of reducing recidivism, strengthening food security, and supporting a smoother transition back into the community for formerly incarcerated individuals.

With 1 in 3 households experiencing food insecurity, this bill advances state efforts towards fair access to food – in this case via SNAP benefits for individuals transitioning out of incarceration by providing immediate food assistance. Enhancing benefits and accessibility empowers individuals in our community, providing them with the support they need to thrive and succeed.

Please support HB1518 HD1 SD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is placed below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Anne Frederick,
Executive Director

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 1:48:27 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in **strong support of HB1518**, a smart, compassionate, and cost-effective bill that closes a dangerous hunger gap for individuals reentering our communities after incarceration.

Currently, individuals cannot apply for SNAP benefits until after they are released. This creates a devastating delay: people walk out of prison with nothing—no income, no resources, and no way to purchase food—then wait weeks or months for their application to be processed. During this critical window, over **90% of people recently released report food insecurity**, and many go entire days without eating.

This is not only a moral failure; it is a public safety failure. Food instability is directly linked to increased risk of homelessness and recidivism. When we fail to meet the most basic human need for nutrition, we undermine the entire purpose of rehabilitation and set people up to fail.

HB1518 fixes this by allowing incarcerated individuals to apply for SNAP **before** release, ensuring benefits are available the moment they walk free. This is not a novel experiment; **thirteen states have successfully implemented SNAP pre-release waivers**, proving this approach works.

This bill is also a sound fiscal investment. Ensuring returning citizens have food access reduces reliance on emergency rooms, shelters, and crisis services. More importantly, it reduces recidivism, saving taxpayers the enormous cost of reincarceration.

Supporting basic needs at reentry is not a handout; it is a down payment on successful rehabilitation, community safety, and human dignity. I urge you to pass HB1518.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 3:40:19 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of. Thank you.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:24:11 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
fred hofer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1 SD1. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Respectfully,

Fred Hofer

Hilo Hawai'i

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:26:11 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:28:45 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Blair	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:32:42 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB1518 HD1 SD1. This would require DHS to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This will help to strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, who will need this security to get back on their feet once released.

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcis Kemble

Makiki

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:45:42 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy Shaver	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 1518 HD1 SD1.

Food security is foundational to financial stability, yet it remains a pressing challenge in Hawai‘i, where approximately one in three households experiences food insecurity. This reality is especially acute for individuals reentering the community after incarceration, who often face significant barriers to meeting their basic needs.

Under current federal law, individuals convicted of certain drug-related felony offenses may face restrictions or disqualification from accessing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. These barriers can make successful reentry more difficult, increasing the risk of economic instability and recidivism.

Recognizing this, the United States Department of Agriculture has established a pre-release SNAP administrative waiver that allows states to process applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals prior to their release from correctional facilities. This approach helps ensure that individuals have access to food assistance immediately upon reentry, supporting a more stable and successful transition back into the community.

HB 1518 HD1 SD1 would enable Hawai‘i to join a growing number of states that have adopted this common-sense approach. By directing the Department of Human Services to seek a federal waiver and implement a pre-release SNAP application process, this bill would remove unnecessary barriers and promote greater equity in access to essential support.

Strengthening food security for individuals returning from incarceration is not only a matter of compassion, but also a practical strategy for reducing recidivism, supporting public health, and building stronger, more resilient communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for HB 1518 HD1 SD1.

Christy Shaver

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:47:59 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John C Wert III	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Mahalo for your attention

Prof John C Wert (Ret)

Wailuku, Maui

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:48:29 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Polk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly urge the committees to pass HB1518 HD1 SSD1. Helping incarcerated individuals, who are scheduled for release, apply for SNAP benefits would be a big step toward helping individuals reintegrate into the community and avoid reincarceration. Hawaii now has one of the highest rates of recidivism in the country. Every step that helps lower that rate saves us money.

Please pass HB1518.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:57:00 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Adrian Boone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, I support this Bill because it will allow people who were formally incarcerated to have access to food. Food security is one of the biggest problems facing the people of every state in this country, especially in Hawaii, where one in three families in Hawaii face food insecurity. Allowing people regardless of if they were formally incarcerated for felonies involving the use of mind altering drugs, allows them to have the human right to have access to food. Giving them pathways to access food through the snap program, will take away one of the many burdens of being reassimilated into public after having been incarcerated for many years. With the partial cost of food taken away by having having a snap card, these formally incarcerated people will be able to focus on using the money saved, to pay for rent, for bills, and pay for transportation. This will all allow them to take the steps in having a normal life, and in being a law abiding citizen, by having constant access to a source like SNAP to buy food. Please support this bill like the other 13 states in the United States have done, to prove that Hawaii cares for all of its people, regardless of if they were formally incarcerated. Access to food is a human right forever in human, and SNAP benefits should be given to all without prejudice.

thank you,

Adrian Boone

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:01:11 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members.

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Mahalo,

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:14:24 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status

Thank you

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:52:36 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie jaramillo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of this bill to expand pre-release access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for individuals nearing release from incarceration.

Access to food is a basic human need, yet many individuals leaving correctional facilities face immediate food insecurity during one of the most vulnerable transitions in their lives. Upon release, people are expected to secure housing, find employment, reconnect with family, and comply with supervision requirements—often with little to no resources. Without reliable access to food, these challenges become even more difficult to overcome.

This bill offers a practical and compassionate solution by allowing eligible individuals to begin the SNAP application process before they are released. By ensuring that benefits are available immediately upon reentry, the bill helps eliminate unnecessary delays that can leave people without support for days or even weeks. This simple change can make a meaningful difference in stabilizing individuals during their transition back into the community.

From a personal perspective, I believe that successful reentry starts with meeting basic needs. When people have access to food, they are better positioned to focus on finding work, maintaining stable housing, and rebuilding their lives. Providing this support is not just the right thing to do—it also benefits our communities by reducing the likelihood of recidivism and promoting long-term stability.

This bill also reflects a smart use of existing systems by encouraging coordination between correctional facilities and human services agencies. Streamlining the application process improves efficiency while ensuring that eligible individuals do not fall through the cracks.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support this measure. Expanding pre-release SNAP access is a common-sense step that promotes dignity, stability, and successful reintegration.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Leslie Jaramillo

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:58:36 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruta Jordans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This measure sounds like something made for Hawaii. Showing aloha to individuals during prerelease by allowing them to get SNAP benefits. It is a very positive way at acknowledge and help incarcerated people. Please support HB1518!

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:59:20 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i and is a critical component of financial stability. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

this bill will establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release and thus strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF HB 1518, HD1, SD1 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Gabbard, Senator Hashimoto for my Maui district, Senator DeCoite of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I live in Wailuku, Maui. I write to you today in **strong support of HB 1518, HD1, SD1 - Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**. This is a pivotal piece of legislation that has the potential to improve SNAP access and to strengthen our state's food security landscape.

As you may be aware, SNAP is critical to the over 155,000 residents who receive benefits in Hawai'i. Even though SNAP is a critical program for to provide food security for our friends and neighbors, SNAP applicants face many barriers to applying for federal SNAP benefits. Social service organizations have witnessed clients lose crucial benefits during the recertification process, despite no changes to eligibility.

The pre-release program included in this bill provides immediate SNAP access to formerly incarcerated people, over 70% of whom are affected by not being allowed to apply to SNAP before being released. This bill will help address food insecurity and support successful reintegration of this population. Eliminating the drug felony ban will allow our residents to receive the benefits they deserve, regardless of treatment status.

If the purpose of incarceration is rehabilitation, as the evidence suggests it should be and as our moral imperative requires, we must remove barriers to food security and successful reintegration. I request that you **support HB1518, HD1, SD1**, because it strives to achieve this shared goal of compassion and dignity for all who call Hawai'i home.

Mahalo for all you do for your constituents,

Christine L. Andrews, J.D.
Wailuku, Maui

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:31:15 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lily Troy MD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1518 HD1 SD1.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:07:27 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Lu Kelley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha from Kauai.

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Thank you.

Mary Lu Kelley, Koloa

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:51:00 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tammy M DeBernardi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tammy DeBernardi, and I am a resident of Hawai‘i Island. I am writing in strong support of HB 1518 HD1 SD1, which would establish a pre-release SNAP application process for individuals nearing release from incarceration.

Food security is a critical component of successful reentry into our communities. One in three households in Hawai‘i already struggles with food insecurity — and formerly incarcerated individuals face this challenge at even greater rates, often exacerbated by federal restrictions that permanently disqualify those convicted of certain drug-related felonies from accessing SNAP and TANF benefits.

The United States Department of Agriculture has already created a pathway for states to address this gap through a pre-release SNAP administrative waiver, which allows states to process applications and conduct eligibility interviews before an individual is released. Thirteen states have already taken advantage of this waiver. It is time for Hawai‘i to join them.

By directing the Department of Human Services to seek this federal waiver, HB 1518 HD1 SD1 would help ensure that individuals leaving correctional facilities can access food support from day one — reducing hunger, strengthening stability, and lowering the risk of recidivism. This is a smart, humane, and cost-effective investment in public safety and community well-being.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB 1518 HD1 SD1.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Tammy DeBernardi
Ocean View, Ka'u, Hawai'i Island

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 9:28:33 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Colleen Rost-Banik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Judiciary and WAM Committee Members,

My name is Colleen Rost-Banik. I am an Instructor of Sociology at University of Hawaii, Manoa. I also facilitate a creative writing project at the Women's Community Correctional Center.

I write in support of HB1518, which would support a program to begin the eligibility process for SNAP benefits while they are still incarcerated so that they have access to food upon their release from prison. I urge you to support this bill as reentry is extremely challenging, and most people coming out of prison do not have the financial resources needed for survival.

I have seen many people come back to prison after being released. I've heard time and time again that when they are released, they simply do not have the financial supports needed to be successful. So, they revert to survival techniques that can land them back in prison. As a State, we need to do a much better job of preparing people for a successful reentry. HB1518 would not only help people who are being released from prison but also help the community at large. When we don't help our neighbors who are financially strapped, the entire community suffers.

Please support HB1518.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.
Colleen Rost-Banik, Ph.D.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 9:32:11 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nanea Lo, and I am writing in strong support of HB1518 HD1 SD1.

Food security is a fundamental component of financial stability and overall well-being. Here in Hawai‘i, one in three households experiences food insecurity—an alarming reality that disproportionately impacts our most vulnerable communities, including individuals reentering society after incarceration.

Current federal law permanently disqualifies individuals with certain drug-related felony convictions from accessing SNAP and TANF benefits. These restrictions create unnecessary barriers at a critical moment when stability, access to food, and support systems are essential for successful reintegration.

This measure offers a practical and compassionate solution. By allowing the Department of Human Services to seek a federal waiver to implement a pre-release SNAP application process, Hawai‘i can ensure that individuals leaving correctional facilities have immediate access to food assistance upon reentry. This approach aligns with efforts already adopted by other states and supported by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Strengthening food security during reentry is not only a matter of equity—it is a proven strategy to reduce recidivism and promote long-term stability for individuals, families, and communities.

HB1518 HD1 SD1 also takes an important step toward removing blanket disqualifications tied to past convictions, recognizing that access to basic needs like food should not be contingent on one’s history, but rather on their present need.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. I respectfully urge your support for this measure.

Me ke aloha ‘āina,

Nanea Lo, 96826

Sierra Club of Hawai‘i Member

Hawai'i Workers Center Board Member

Clean Elections Hawai'i Member

Honolulu Tenants Union Member

350 Hawai'i Member

Carbon Cashback Hawai'i Member

Hawai'i Tax Fairness Coalition Member

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 10:44:31 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Kawamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 1518 HD1 SD1. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 9:59:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
laurel brier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Another important step to ending food
insecurity for all Hawaii residents. Pass
HB1518**

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 10:48:36 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noel Shaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Food access is essential to reduce recidivism.

Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Committee on Judiciary
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 8, 2026
Time: 10:15 AM
Place: Conference Room 211

**SUPPORT: [HB1518 HD1 SD1](#)
RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Aloha Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs and Committee Members:

My name is Kristi Fernandez, and I am writing today to express my support of SNAP benefits pre-release application process for inmates nearing release.

As a current inmate, who has struggled previously to require the necessary financial resources to support myself once I was released from prison back in 2022, I know having the resources for food, shelter, medical, etc. made available and set up upon our release is a great supporting element to keep us on track and compliant while acclimating back into society.

Thank you for your time and attention regarding this matter.

Best regards,

Kristi Fernandez

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 12:10:49 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meredith Buck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 4:00:54 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 4:46:13 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Rhoads, Vice, Chair Senator Gabbard and Members of the Committee on Judiciary, and Chair Senator Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Senator Moriwaki and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Please support HB 1518 HD 1 SD 1 relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. I think this bill would be helpful to incarcerated people who are nearing release and may reduce recidivism.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki and life long resident of Oahu

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 6:13:34 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Inam Rahman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

HB 1518 HD1 SD1 — Relating to Pre-Release SNAP Access

By Inam U. Rahman, MD

Physician • Former Hawai‘i Medical Association President • West O‘ahu Resident

—

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support with targeted safeguards for HB 1518 HD1 SD1.

This bill addresses a critical but often overlooked gap in our reentry system: what happens in the first days after release.

As a physician in West O‘ahu, I have seen how instability—especially lack of food—can quickly unravel a person’s chance at recovery, employment, and reintegration. When individuals leave correctional facilities without access to basic necessities, we should not be surprised when the cycle repeats.

Food security is not a luxury—it is a foundation for public safety and human dignity.

Why This Bill Matters

HB 1518 allows Hawai'i to align with federal policy by seeking a waiver to initiate pre-release SNAP applications, ensuring eligible individuals can access food assistance immediately upon reentry.

This is a commonsense, evidence-informed approach that:

- Reduces recidivism by stabilizing individuals during the highest-risk transition period
- Improves public health outcomes by reducing hunger and stress
- Supports workforce reentry by allowing individuals to focus on employment, not survival
- Leverages primarily federal funding, making it fiscally responsible

States that have implemented similar policies are recognizing a simple truth:

When basic needs are met, communities are safer.

Concerns That Should Be Addressed

While I support the intent of this bill, several areas warrant careful attention:

- Expanding eligibility regardless of treatment status for substance-related offenses may raise concerns if not paired with access to recovery services
- Implementation will require coordination between correctional facilities and the Department of Human Services

- Public trust depends on clear safeguards, accountability, and measurable outcomes

These concerns are not reasons to oppose the bill—but rather opportunities to strengthen it.

Recommended Safeguards

To ensure HB 1518 achieves its full impact, I respectfully recommend the following amendments:

1. Integrate Reentry Planning

Require coordination between SNAP enrollment and existing reentry services, including:

- Case management
- Workforce development programs
- Housing referrals

Food assistance should be part of a broader, structured pathway to stability.

2. Encourage Access to Treatment Services

For individuals with substance-related offenses:

- Prioritize voluntary referral to treatment and recovery programs
- Avoid rigid mandates that could delay or deny food access

We should remove barriers to recovery—not create new ones.

3. Ensure Administrative Readiness

- Establish clear protocols between correctional facilities and DHS
- Consider phased implementation or pilot programs to ensure smooth rollout
- Provide adequate staffing and training to prevent delays

4. Strengthen Accountability and Transparency

Require annual reporting on:

- Number of individuals enrolled pre-release
- Time to benefit activation post-release
- Recidivism and reentry outcomes

Data-driven evaluation will help refine and sustain the program.

5. Maintain Program Integrity

- Ensure eligibility verification is completed prior to benefit activation
- Utilize existing systems to minimize fraud and duplication

Closing

At its core, this bill asks a simple question:

Do we want people leaving incarceration to succeed—or to struggle?

If the goal is safer communities, reduced recidivism, and a more effective justice system, then helping individuals meet their most basic needs is not optional—it is essential.

HB 1518 HD1 SD1 moves Hawai‘i in the right direction. With thoughtful safeguards, it can become a model for smart, compassionate, and fiscally responsible policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Warm regards,

Inam Rahman, MD

Waipahū, Hawai‘i

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 6:40:20 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Members,

I am writing to ask that you support HB1518 HD1 SD1 which establishes a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Melissa Barker

Kapaa, HI

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 6:44:18 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Teresa Bill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Committeemembers ~ (WAM & Judiciary)

Thank you for holding a joint hearing to facilitate the movement of this important Bill, [HB 1518 HD1 SD1](#) Expanding Pre-Release SNAP Access to formerly incarcerated individuals through a federal waiver. I strongly support this bill and urge you to do so as well.

As someone who works in the community to assist others with SNAP applications, I know this process presents many barriers and can take quite some time to complete the application and qualifying interview.

Completing the process to qualify for SNAP prior to release gives people access to vital food assistance upon their release – is foundational (together with Medicaid). Then they can focus on job seeking, substance use treatment (if needed) and family reunification. Giving formerly incarcerated folks access to stable food is a necessary foundation.

High food prices contribute to the food insecurity of so many of our local families, and those returning to the community from incarceration face high food & housing costs as well.

We/Hawaii should do everything we can to support and expand SNAP access. The federal waiver is available and a tool we should make use of for all who need and qualify.

Please support , [HB 1518 HD1 SD1](#).

Thank You.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 7:46:47 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rick Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill that would help those incarcerated to maximize their ability to be back in the community in a healthy way.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 7:52:10 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carla Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 8:00:18 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Rhoads and Dela Cruz, Vice Chairs Gabbard and Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Committees on Judiciary & Ways and Means,

My name is Jackie Keefe, and I am **in strong support of HB1518 HD1 SD1**, which establishes a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release.

It is well known that it's challenging for formerly incarcerated people to find employment, and this bill takes steps to provide them with food security upon their release. I'm not sure if you've ever tried to apply for SNAP benefits, but it is a tedious process and one that's difficult to complete if you are hungry or lack resources.

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 8:02:07 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hayley Peter-Contesse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Hayley Peter-Contesse, Mākaha

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 8:10:58 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in favor of HB1518 because I believe giving a hand up to people who were incarcerated for drug offenses is compassionate and will enhance the health of our society, keeping people out of poverty and reducing recidivism. Mahalo for considering my views.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 8:17:02 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Naomi Hanohano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Naomi Hanohano and I am in support of this measure. The reasons I support this bill is because I did work at the Halawa Correctional facility for 4 years and have watched inmates being released wearing a prison issue white t-shirt and gray short and a black trash bag with their personal belongings. They have no one to pick them up and they have to walk from the facility to the bus stop and I'm not even sure if they have bus fare.or a place to go or money to eat. Having at least some SNAP benenefits may help them eat until they find a place or let them be a little self supporting if they are fortunate to have some one they can stay with.

The second reason is we had a friend who was incarcerated and literally ended up at our doorstep with nothing except the clothes on his back, we took him in, fed him and gave him somewhere to stay for a while. We didn't mind because we could. Unfortunately, it didn't work out so he did have to leave after a short period of time, but if he did have SNAP benefits, I feel it would have helped him.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 8:18:50 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Goodwin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Recidivism costs taxpayers money. HB 1518 helps the released prisoner gain footing back into the community as a contributing member and not a continuing burden.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 9:40:43 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leo Nahe Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 8:43:34 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Leake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

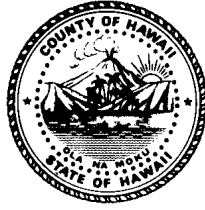
Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Anne Lake and I am of Kaumakapili Church in Kalihi-Palama. Our church has offered a food pantry to the community for over 40 years. My role in this endeavor is to enroll new clients. Most clients who come to our pantry use our food to tie them over until their next SNAP benefit gets to their account. For those awaiting SNAP approval, the food pantry is thier only source of food.

I am writing to express strong support for HB1518, a pivotal piece of legislation that has the potential to improve SNAP access and ultimately strengthen our state’s food security landscape. Over 90% of people recently released from prison report food insecurity, and many go entire days without eating. This bill will strengthen SNAP by allowing inmates to apply for SNAP before being released to access food immediately upon reentry, instead of waiting weeks or months during community reintegration.

Mahalo for your leadership and for your consideration of HB1518. This bill is essential to building a thriving, food-secure Hawai‘i while strengthening one of our most essential safety nets.

Jennifer Kagiwada
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: April 7, 2026
TO: Senate Committee on Ways and Means & Judiciary
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2
SUBJECT: HB1518 HD1 SD1

Aloha Chair(s) Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chair(s) Moriwaki and Gabbard, and esteemed Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support of HB1518 HD1**. Reentry into the community is a very vulnerable period, and no one should leave incarceration facing hunger as their first obstacle. By removing unnecessary SNAP restrictions and establishing a pre-release application process we can ensure eligible individuals can access food support immediately upon release. A recent report from the Hawai'i Food Basket identified that 43% of Hawai'i County households face difficulty in accessing sufficient food. Giving those in need access to basic nutritional necessities will strengthen stability, reduce recidivism, and support safer communities.

Mahalo,

Jenn Kagiwada

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 9:36:34 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Regina Gregory	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 9:46:11 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan McCorry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please make sure keiki in Hawaii are not hungry at school!! Thank you, Susan

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 9:49:11 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
emily gambino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Emily Gambino

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 10:12:09 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai‘i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

Mahalo!

LATE

Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Committee on Judiciary

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 10:15am Conference Room 211

Testimony in full support of HB1518 HD1 SD1 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Aloha mai e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

Aloha nui e Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Phyllis K. Waiiau and I am a lifelong resident of Papakōlea here on O‘ahu island. I’m testifying in **full support of HB1518 HD1 SD1** relating to SNAP.

This bill proposes to establish a pre-release Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application process for inmates nearing release.

This bill also seeks to strengthen the financial security and food security of formerly incarcerated individuals. This is also in alignment with intentions and actions to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement. As a child of an incarcerated adult (in my youth), I saw first hand the difficulties and struggles of my parents to establish and maintain food security opportunities for our household due to status as a former inmate, ex con. I am forever thankful that my other parent worked hard through holding down multiple jobs and through sheer grit both of them were later on able to stabilize our household situation.

I strongly support this bill because I believe that everyone, all formerly incarcerated kanaka can succeed if we allow for some grace and humanity for inmates nearing release back into our communities and ‘ohana.

We have a kuleana to nurture, engage and support our community members and **HB1518 HD1 SD1** is a way to start on the path. Together, we can.

I appreciate this opportunity to show my strong support for **HB1518 HD1 SD1**.

Phyllis K. Waiiau

Papakōlea, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i

LATE

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 12:53:16 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glenn Choy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. Thank you.

LATE

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 3:15:59 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Douglas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

To strengthen the financial security of formerly incarcerated individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture established a prisoner pre-release supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) administrative waiver, which allows states to process SNAP applications and conduct eligibility interviews for individuals who are about to be released from prison or jail.

The purpose of the waiver is to reduce recidivism by strengthening food security for individuals reentering the community after correctional confinement.

Through this bill, Hawai'i could join thirteen other states which have created a waiver to accept pre-release SNAP applications, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Establishing this process would require the department of human services to seek a federal waiver to establish a pre-release SNAP application process for inmates nearing release. This would also allow all individuals convicted of an offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance to apply for SNAP benefits, regardless of treatment status.

LATE

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 3:38:02 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Deets	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1.**

I work in the legal field and am aware that 1) we incarcerate too many people in the State and in the U.S., and 2) a disproportionate number of incarcerated people are people of color. Further, our penal system does not tend to rehabilitate and recidivism is high.

All this considered, I support **HB 1518 HD1 SD1** for the following reasons:

Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

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LATE

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 7:00:44 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaleiheana-a-Pohaku Stormcrow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai‘i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

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LATE

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 4:42:56 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Nihipali	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2471

This bill clarifies that the powers granted to artificial persons do not include spending money or anything of value to influence elections or ballot measures. This bill does not restrict any individual's right to speak, organize, or participate in democracy. It simply defines the limits of what state-created entities may do as entities.

{Insert additional comments here}

SB2471 helps restore clarity, accountability, and confidence in our democratic system.

Mahalo,

Michele Nihipali

54074 A Kam Hwy.

Hauula, HI 96717

LATE

HB-1518-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 9:30:59 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/8/2026 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Annalise Brolaski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please **support HB 1518 HD1 SD1**. Food security is a critical component of financial stability and, food security, is an issue affecting one in three households in Hawai'i. Within the households on island, federal law permanently disqualifies household members convicted of a federal or state felony offense involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance from access to SNAP and TANF benefits.

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Aloha & Mahalo,

Annalise

